

Opening Address
Senate President Pro Tem Edward E. Quick
January 6, 1999

Ladies and gentlemen, Lt. Governor Wilson, Judge Scott Wright, Judge Byron Kinder, distinguished guests, fellow Senators, friends and family members... I would like to welcome each of you to the opening of the First Regular Session of the 90th Missouri General Assembly.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome back my old friends and colleagues... and to be joined by our new colleagues... Senator Mary Bland, Senator Steve Stoll and Senator Sarah Steelman... I know how special this day is for you.

I want to personally congratulate you... and ask my fellow Senators and everyone in the gallery to rise and join me in welcoming these three new members of the Missouri Senate.

This is also a very special day for me... Thank you for allowing me the opportunity... and the honor... of serving as your President Pro Tem.

At this time, I would like to introduce some people who mean a great deal to me... and I would like for them to stand.

My wife, Jane

My aunt, Nancy Swanson

My sister, Elsie Thompson

My son Brent, his wife Shari and my granddaughters, Katie and Tiffany

My son Mark, and his friend Michelle and my granddaughter, Morgan

My daughter Rebecca, her husband Mike and my grandson, Nathan and granddaughter, Marley

All the way from New York, my wife's parents, Ben and Muriel Sokobin, and my sister-in-law, Barbara Horowitz.

The Missouri Senate is an institution - - and a family - - which is rich with tradition and service to this state and its people.

It has been my privilege to serve the people of Missouri while in the Senate... And now, I consider it a great privilege to also SERVE the Senate.

During my 14 years here... I have had the good fortune to serve under the leadership of Senators who have led us in the direction of a better and brighter Missouri.

Using their leadership and hard work as my model... and in the tradition of service that is the trademark of the Missouri Senate... I would like to make my commitment to you... to be fair... to be honest... and most of all... to help create an atmosphere where listening and respecting one another takes priority.

This 34 member body... the Missouri Senate... comes together each year for the purpose of making Missouri a better place to live and do business.

Each Senator brings their own values... experiences... and points of view... That is the beauty of our system... We have representatives from all different segments of our society... and diverse areas of the state.

We meet on this common ground to do the very best we can... for the people who sent us here to represent them.

Each of us has had to travel on many different roads in order to be here today... These experiences have molded the foundations for our beliefs... our opinions... and how we are able to come together to solve problems.

I have traveled on a few roads myself... and frankly, I am overwhelmed right now... with my good fortune to be standing before you today.

I can remember in the winter of 1940... leaving Rich Hill, Mo., with my family... for a migrant tent camp in Bakersfield, California... I returned to Missouri one year later.

At the age of thirteen I was working in a coal mine in Higginsville... and at fifteen in a shoe factory... One year later I found myself making 100's of strawberry shortcakes at the Forum Cafeteria... Following in the footsteps of my childhood hero, my Uncle Marty... I enlisted in the Navy at seventeen... and was off to Korea.

In 1960, I had the opportunity to join the Kansas City, Missouri Fire Department... I can tell you that next to being a state Senator... being a firefighter was the proudest time of my life.

Politics was not something that I thought a lot about... and I certainly never thought about being an elected official... However, in 1975... I became angry because I felt that my neighborhood... was being unfairly taxed for a road improvement.

So I ran for the Kansas City City Council... just to straighten a few things out... In 1984... I decided to run for the Missouri Senate... Here it is 1999... and I'm still trying to straighten out a few things.

I have always been grateful... for all the opportunities that this country has afforded me... And I thank God for the strength... and the ability... I was given and taught.

Because of my life experiences... I learned determination... desire... strength... compassion... and a stubbornness to make life better for myself and my family.

I am so fortunate to be able to work within these walls... and with all of you... to help make life better for all the people in the state of Missouri.

Today we begin the First Regular Session of the 90th Missouri General Assembly... It is the first of the last... This will be the first session of the last General Assembly of this century and this millennium.

1998 brought with it many disappointments and much pain to this country... However, in Missouri... it brought much to be proud of.

Together... we've accomplished so much!

Together... we've cut taxes... and improved services!

Together... we've provided the opportunity... to have health insurance... for over 90,000 children of working families!

Together... we've cracked down on drug dealers!

Together... we've helped families... by increasing tax deductions for dependents 300 percent!

Together... we've helped our older citizens... with their property taxes... and helped our youngest citizens... by establishing new early childhood education opportunities.

Together... we gave tax refunds to our citizens.

Each one of these accomplishments... started as a simple idea.

Almost every idea... is a good idea to someone... It is our responsibility to determine which ideas are best for everyone.

We had a great year last year... perhaps as good as any Senate... in this state's history.

But, I'll tell you right now, this Senate... will not rest on its accomplishments!

We face the future of this state... on behalf of the citizens who elected us... and gave us the honor of being here... We have work to do!

We must review the tobacco settlement... the largest civil action... in America's history.

We will have to work with the courts to determine... how much will be allowed to be used... to best benefit all Missourians.

We must work to improve... the opportunities our children have to learn... We must continue... to make educating the children of Missouri... our priority.

We face an ever-increasing burden... on our corrections system... If we are to continue... providing the citizens the protection they deserve... we must formulate a method of change.

One of our greatest responsibilities... is the spending of taxpayer dollars... The Appropriations Committee... and I... will be

looking at new ways... to evaluate the allocation process of funding budget requests.

We will face no shortage of issues... in the session that begins today. From the salary commission to the transportation issue... from the deregulation of utilities to cutting taxes... a tremendous amount of work lies ahead.

As these issues... and many others... come before us... each of us approaching the issue from their own perspective and background... I know that after all the yelling... and maybe even a few tears... we will be able to resolve these issues... with the same sense of fairness and respect we have shown in the past.

This has been a difficult... and painful time in our country... I ask myself... what can we learn from these tragic events that have created... an uncompromising... divisive... partisanship in our government?

Though all the answers to that question... are not apparent yet... I do know we MUST work toward healing our wounds... and return to our promise... of a truly representative democracy.

A democracy... that serves the best interests of its citizens... and not the interests of those that serve!

A few weeks ago... I read an inscription on a monument... dedicated to Samuel Gompers... the founder of the AFL-CIO... I believe the inscription reflects the views of Missouri citizens. It reads:

We want more schoolhouses... and less jails.

More books... and less guns.

More learning... and less vice.

More leisure... and less greed.

More justice... and less revenge.

We want more opportunities... to cultivate our better nature.

The elections are behind us... I challenge each one of you... to rise above the partisanship... We are the Missouri Senate! We MUST dedicate ourselves to the purpose for which we were elected.

Thank you.
